

## July 12, 2005- Gas Prices Set New Record Highs in West Virginia Again

### GAS PRICES SET NEW RECORD HIGHS IN WEST VIRGINIA AGAIN

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV), outraged by the continuing trend of higher gas prices and inaction from the White House, is once again calling on the Administration to assist West Virginians by using their authority to help lower gas prices. "The gas price crisis started 15 weeks ago in West Virginia and the price of gasoline surpassed record highs once again in our state," said Rahall. "For the past 15 weeks I have been providing ideas for lowering gas prices, and the Administration has refused to take any action."

On April 5, 2005, gas prices in West Virginia surpassed previous records, with the average gas price across the state reaching \$2.23 a gallon. In the last two weeks the price of a barrel of oil, which is the main factor in setting the price of gasoline, has risen to over \$61 at times. This \$61 per barrel price is also a record for the Nation.

Today, July 12, 2005, the average gas price in West Virginia soared to an all new high of \$2.33 a gallon. Some of the highest gas prices in the state are found in southern West Virginia.

"These prices affect every working family, every small business and every family farm," said Rahall. "It is plain and simple: our Nation and our State do not run as well as they can with such high gas costs. I urge the White House to take my suggestions and help lower gas prices and jump start the economy."

Rahall has laid out many different suggestions that would help lower the gas prices. He has urged the President to use the oil in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to increase supply in America, a tactic that was used by President Clinton in the 1990's to successfully lower the price of gasoline.

Rahall also urged the Administration, through the Department of Justice, to investigate the big oil companies. As gas prices continue to rise while the oil companies are celebrating record profits, there are many who fear that the oil companies are setting the prices higher than necessary and gouging West Virginians at the pump. Additionally, the ongoing occurrence of even higher gas prices around holiday weekends and high travel periods is cause for alarm by many Americans.

"These companies are making billions and they are taking it directly from hardworking West Virginians," said Rahall. "In the last 3 years, the average gas price in West Virginia has risen by a dollar a gallon. Meanwhile, we have more oil stored in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve than ever before. This doesn't add up and the oil companies continue to see record profits gained on the backs of my fellow West Virginians. This has got to stop."

In addition, Rahall has urged the President to live up to his campaign promise and pressure the OPEC Nations to increase production and lower prices. He pointed out that while the President was campaigning in 2000, he criticized

President Clinton for not pressuring the OPEC Nations and for allowing gas prices to become so high. Rahall notes that now that President Bush is in office he has turned a deaf ear to his own criticisms of Clinton and meanwhile he has allowed the gas prices to reach record highs at crisis levels never before seen.

Rahall is also a large proponent of becoming energy independent from the Middle East and the OPEC countries. He has been a longtime advocate of the development of additional coal based fuels including liquid and gaseous fuels to help our Nation become energy independent. In a recent column, Rahall wrote, "Today, as our gas prices are at an alarmingly high price, as the price of a barrel of oil continues to rise and reach record heights, and as a major provider of oil may be bought by China, we are most certainly not independent. We are remarkably dependent on the actions of other nations who own the oil we use to drive our cars, and it seems that even more of the oil will be out of our hands and in the hands of China with the possible purchase of Unocal. The price of oil in the hands of a few affects the very fabric of our National economic health and wealth."

Without action from the Administration or the majority party in Congress, Rahall sees no end in sight to the gas price crisis in West Virginia. With gas prices seemingly ready to rise continuously, Rahall says he remains confident that the President will actually help West Virginians by taking action, noting that he hopes the President will build on his Independence Day visit to West Virginia by helping our Nation become energy independent as well.